LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

SIR,—In the xxii. chapter of Genesis we find recorded the great trial of Abraham's faith, who built an altar whereon to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, where was afterwards erected by Solomon the great Temple. After this event the Patriarch went to Beer-sheba, where he had planted a grove (Gen. xxi. 33), and where he must have built an altar, which is implied from its being stated in the same verse that he "called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." The planting of groves near altars appears to have been adopted into the idolatrous worship of the Canaanites, and for this reason doubtless it is that we find a divine command was given, when the Israelites came up out of Egypt against this custom, "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee." (Deut. xvi. 21.) From Strabo we learn that "It was so common among the Pagans to erect altars and temples in groves, and to dedicate them to religious uses, that all sacred places, even those where no trees were to be seen, were called groves." (Geograph. lib. ix.) This practice was thought to have been introduced into Greece from Phœnicia, by Cadmus (Potter. Grec. Antiq.). We find frequent allusion in Holy Writ to groves, as connected with false worship.

In Genesis xxv. (v. 16), after speaking of the sons of Ishmael, and mentioning their names, it is stated, "these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles, twelve princes, according to their nations." After a lapse of thirty-seven centuries, we behold in the Arabian inhabitant of the desert at the present day the same customs, the same dress, and the same manner of living which marked the children of Ishmael; wild, and lawless, and roving, they live by plunder, and as their hand is against every man, so is every man's hand against them (Gen. xvi. 12); yet they have always preserved their independence (thus fulfilling the rest of the prediction, "he shall dwell in the presence of his brethren"). Accordingly, neither the Assyrians, nor the Egyptians under Sesostris, nor the Persians under Cyrus, would subdue them, they alone disdained to acknowledge the power or court the friendship of Alexander the Great; neither were the Roman arms more successful under Pompey, Trojan, or Severus; and in more modern times, neither Christian, Turk, Mameluke, nor Tartar has been able to make any impression upon them; whilst their own conquests, under the guidance of Mahomet and the Caliphs, are the most rapid and astonishing on record. The state of continual warfare in which they were placed would oblige them to have some kind of fortification and inclosure within which they could remove their families and cattle in safety, when threatened by an incursion from a hostile tribe, and this species of building is perhaps meant in the verse quoted above; for their usual habitations formerly, as now, were tents, the most suitable dwellings for wandering tribes, whose chief wealth lay in cattle, and who would hardly erect any very substantial buildings, when the failure of pasture or the want of water for their numerous flocks and herds might oblige them frequently to change their place of abode; their tents, easily constructed, were easily transported, being formed of a few upright poles, covered chiefly with the skins of animals; and the residence of the chief of a tribe was only distinguished from others by the central situation, or, as at this day, by the spear placed in front of the tent. Such simple habitations would suffice also for other nations as long as their possessions consisted chiefly of flocks and herds, and they were simple in their wants; but when they became masters of gold and silver, they would be induced to render their dwellings more secure, by making them more substantial, to preserve their wealth from the rapacity of unfriendly neighbours, and assembling in large numbers for mutual protection, they would confine themselves within certain limits, which they would fence round with walls of such materials as could be most readily procured; this inclosed space would constitute a city. We will now return to the history of Abraham, when we shall find that, in addition to the proofs of piety he displayed in raising various altars for the service of his Creator, he also provided a place of burial for his family. The transaction is altogether one which merits attention. In Genesis xxiii. it is stated that Sarah died, and that Abraham spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you, give me a possession of a burying-place with you that I may bury my dead out of my sight." The generous stranger wished Abraham to bury his dead in "the choice" of their sepulchres, but the patriarch besought them to use their interest with Ephron to sell him for its worth the cave of Macphelah. Ephron wished Abraham to accept the piece of ground at his hands, but he, who had on a former occasion (Gen. xiv. 23.) refused "to take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet," lest any one should say, "I have made Abraham rich," rejected the generous offer, and the friendly contest was closed by his paying to Ephron 400 shekels of silver (equal to about 60*l.* sterling of our money, according to Dr. Prideaux), and this purchase included "the field of Ephron and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about," and this property "was made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth before all that went in at the gate of the city" (v. 18). Moses was no doubt very particular in his account of the sepulchre which the founder of the race of Israel purchased, from the natural interest which his descendants would take in any event connected with their illustrious progenitor, and that great importance was attached to the possession of this sepulchre we may gather from the fact, that besides its first occupant Sarah, in it was buried Abraham himself, on which solemn occasion Ishmael, laying aside the remonstrance of his wrongs, even assisted his brother Isaac in paying the last duties to their father (Gen. xxv. 9); that the same mournful service was performed in the same place by Esau and Jacob for their parent (Gen. xxv. 29); that the patriarch Jacob, when in a strange land, made it his earnest request to his favourite son Joseph, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, first, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, Swear unto me; and he sware unto him." (Gen. xlvii. 29, 30, 31). And on his death-bed the aged Israel alludes to this promise that he should be laid in the burial-place of his forefathers, "There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." (Gen. xlix. 31). Thus we see were the remains of the three great patriarchs and their wives deposited in this tomb, which will sufficiently account for the veneration with which it is regarded by the Jews and by the Saracens, who claim an equal interest in Abraham as their common father.

We find that Isaac only built one altar, viz. at Beer-sheba (where his father planted the grove). (Gen. xxvi. 25). This is mentioned in close connection with the digging of a well in the same place. In a country like ours, where water is so abundant, persons are apt to attach too little value to that element from the circumstance that it is easily procured. But in the dry and sandy regions of Asia the possession of it is of the highest importance, since the privation of it amounts to positive calamity. Quarrels frequently arose between the herdsmen of different flocks who strove to secure for their own charge the precious possession of a well. Thus Abraham and Lot parted in consequence of a strife between their servants. (Gen. xiii. 7). Abimelech's servants also "violently" took away a well from Abraham. (Gen. xxi. 25). We observe in the 26th chapter of Genesis, that the Philistines, out of envy (v. 14) of Isaac's great wealth, had stopped up and filled with earth all the wells which his father had digged (v. 15), and that when Isaac digged them again (at Esek, v. 20, Sitnah, v. 21), the herdsmen of Gerar strove for them with Isaac's servants, which altercation occurring more than once, Isaac removed to Beersheba, where he built an altar, "and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there" (v. 25); and there his servants digged a well. In continuance of the narrative two circumstances are mentioned which seem to have resulted from the Divine favour shewn towards him in consequence of his having built the altar as above described (which ceremony he appears to have neglected on former occasions of digging wells). In the same day he received a visit from the King of the Philistines, who came to make peace with him (v. 26) and also the welcome information was imparted to him, that his servants had been successful in finding a supply of water in the well which they had digged (v. 32).

In Jacob's eventful history are several interesting particulars connected with our subject. The first is the setting up of the pillar at Beth-el. He had been sent by his father into Mesopotamia unto Laban his maternal uncle, and in his way hither, "he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." (Gen xxviii. 2.) The meaning of this is, doubtless that the gates of the city were closed when he arrived there, and admission within the walls being refused to him as a stranger, he was obliged to take up his abode for the night in the city porch, "and he took off the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." (v. 2.) And it was here, on the very spot, where he was unfriended and houseless, that he was visited by the remarkable dream of the angelic ladder, and that the promise of Almighty protection was vouchsafed to him. It was a memorial, therefore, of his gratitude, that Jacob erected the pillar whereon he had rested his head during the wonderful vision, and he accompanied the act with a vow, that if he came "again to his father's house in peace," the Lord should be his God (v. 21), and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house." (v. 22.) At the time it was set up for a pillar it must be considered as nothing more than a memorial, because we shall find that when Jabob did return to Beth-el with his family, he there erected an altar. (Gen. xxxv. 7.) One circumstance remains to be noticed, viz. that Jacob, when he set up the pillar, "poured oil upon the top of it" (Gen. xxviii. 18), a very early mode of consecration, from which fact, and from the name of the stone itself, we will endeavour to trace an analogy between this pillar and various structures, which are to be found at the present day in other countries. There are some large single stones still remaining in Cornwall which were erected by the Phœnician miners, and which still retain the name of *Bothal* The cromlechs in Ireland are called Both-al, which has the same meaning as Beth-el, viz. "the house of God." The stones placed on the tumuli of the dead by the Greeks were called by them Βαιτύλοι, or Βαιτύλια; (baitulia) and Potter, alluding to this circumstance (Antiq. vol. i. p. 226), says, "some are of opinion that their true origin is to be deduced from the pillar of stone which the patriarch Jacob erected at Bethel." The general name Bothal is given to most of the cromlechs, and single unhewn stones, in these islands. The Hindoos, at this day, pour oil on their Pandoo-Koolies, and the Phœnicians called these stones, *meu-ambres*, or the anointed stones. We may, perhaps, trace the name of a town near the great Temple of Stonehenge, from this circumstance,* viz. Amesbury, or Ambres-bury, that is, the city of the *anointed stones*. It will not be a waste of time at this stage of our inquiry, having seen the coincidence of names, to ascertain by whom the custom of dedicating these stones of memorial was spread abroad and introduced so generally. For they are to be found in India, on the shores of the Mediterranean and Red Seas, in France, in Spain, in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and, as we have seen, in these islands. The striking resemblance which they bear to each other in purpose, though found in places so remote from each other, cannot be accounted for, unless they are presumed to have one common origin. For that origin we must look to the Phœnicians, the most celebrated and adventurous navigators of antiquity. The Syrians had a settlement at Utica, on the southern coast of the Mediterranean, another in Spain at Gades, now Cadiz, the Scripture Tarshish and Greek Tartessus, and one in Cornwall, whence Tyre had its tin. (See Ezekiel xxvii. 12.) Wherever they went, they left indelible traces of their footsteps behind; the very names of countries are now the same as were bestowed by them, and therefore it is that we still find remnants of their superstition in the piles which were raised to the worship of Baal and the host of heaven, those

——"stones of power
By Druids raised in magic hour,"

which are seen to this very hour in the Temples of Stonehenge, and Abury in Wiltshire, at Rollrich in Oxfordshire, at Stanton Drew in Somersetshire, at Carnac in Brittany, and in the numerous single stones which are scattered over many of the northern countries of Europe. At Redstone in Yorkshire, is an immense single stone, which is twenty-four feet out of the ground, and it is supposed as much below; it is computed to weigh between forty and fifty tons.*

When Jacob departed with his family, unknown to his father-in-law, he came to Mount Gilead (Gen. xxxi. 21), where he was overtaken by Laban, and here they made a covenant together. "And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar, and Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones and made an heap, and did eat there, upon the heap." (Verses 45, 46.) "And Laban said to Jocob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar which I have cast betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm." (Verses 51, 52.) In times when written language was not yet introduced, we can readily imagine that this *Galeed*, or heap of witness (Verse 48), would be an impressive monument for many succeeding ages, of a covenant between two great contracting parties, and that the materials of which it was composed would render it as enduring as any memorial which could be devised.

After his friendly reception from his brother Esau, we find that Jacob journeyed to Succoth (*i. e. Boothe*), "and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle." (Gen. xxxiii. 17.) In the next verses it is said that he came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, "and pitched his tent before the

* We are sorry by a mischance to be compelled to defer the engravings for this week.

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